



Riverside DUI Enforcement PRESS RELEASE



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Riverside Police Department Challenges Drivers to ‘Silence’ the Distraction *April is Distracted Driving Awareness Month*

Riverside, Calif. – April is National Distracted Driving Awareness Month and the Riverside Police Department will be combining efforts with law enforcement agencies statewide stopping drivers who violate California’s hands-free cell phone law. The Riverside Police Department will join statewide law enforcement on April 4th and April 19th, when all agencies will have additional officers on patrol looking specifically for drivers on their cell phones.

Last year Riverside Police Department issued 2806 citations to driver’s texting, calling or performing another function on their phone. Distracted driving is dangerous, especially when it involves a cell phone. According to preliminary data from the California Highway Patrol (CHP), 66 people were killed and more than 6,500 injured in 2017 from distracted driving-related crashes.

Sergeant Eric Detmer of the Riverside Police Department said, “Cell phones remain one of the top distractions for drivers. Like any bad habit, it can be hard to break, but this habit can have life-altering consequences.”

A 2018 observational survey by the California Office of Traffic Safety (OTS) on driver cell phone use found about 4.5 percent of drivers are still using their cell phone illegally, a nearly 25 percent increase from 3.6 percent total usage in 2017.

Under the most recent cell phone law that went into effect in 2017, drivers are prohibited from having a phone in their hand for any reason and can only use their phone in a hands-free manner. The phones must be mounted on the dashboard, windshield or center console, and can only be touched once with the swipe or tap of a finger to activate or deactivate a function. First-time offenders face a \$162 fine. “That text or phone call will never be worth losing a life over. That is why curbing distracted driving is high on our priority list. A simple remedy to *curbing* the distraction is to enable the ‘Do Not Disturb While Driving’ function on your smart phone when driving,” said Sergeant Detmer.

If you need to make a call or text someone, pull over and park at a safe location. Struggling to stay off the phone while driving? Put your phone in a place you can’t reach, like the backseat or trunk.

Funding for distracted driving enforcement operations are provided by a grant from the California Office of Traffic Safety, through the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

